Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Community Center

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September 6, 2005

Karen Mason, Ph.D., Manager
Office of Suicide Prevention
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South
Denver, CO 80246-1530

Dear Dr. Mason,

Pikes Peak Gay & Lesbian Community Center (PPGLCC) is pleased to collaborate with the Suicide Prevention Partnership to address suicide among the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) community of the Pikes Peak Region.

For some time now, the Colorado Springs area has been labeled intolerant of the gay community living within its boundaries. Whether this reputation is deserved or not, is less important than the fact that perceptions breed fear and fear pushes those teetering on the edge of despondency one step closer to the abyss.

Founded in 1979, PPGLCC provides a variety of resources to gay adults 18 years of age or older. We publish an annual gay-friendly resource directory, sponsor monthly and weekly social/support groups serving nearly 300 individuals, advocate against injustice and inequality, and host the annual PrideFest.

Through our Pride Center, which is open 20 hours per week, we serve approximately 1,000 walkins, and respond to 4,500 phone and email enquiries annually. All who seek out the Pride Center are looking for "community" and gay friendly resources or providers; and over a third require some sort of vital support that entails either legal or therapeutic counseling. Those we serve range in age from teens (whom we refer to Inside/Out Youth Services) to retired individuals. Being gay in the Pikes Peak region is a challenge fraught with the unknown. Gay individuals are often estranged from parents, siblings, children and religious affirmation. Confusion and helplessness is common.

Currently, PPGLCC sponsors weekly support groups for those dealing the HIV, sexually transmitted diseases and Methamphetamine use. A Coming Out group meets twice monthly and we will soon initiate a program for those coping with bipolar disorder and depression. However, we do not at present address suicide. It would be beneficial to have competent staff and program facilitators able to recognize the signs preceding suicide and to have access to reliable referral resources. It would also be valuable for us to provide speakers who can talk to the broader community about these issues as well.

The GLBT community is probably one of the most underserved populations in this area, primarily because of the atmosphere in which they live and work and because many are "in the closet" and not visible to the greater citizenry. GLBT men and women frequently have limited outlets for their personal struggles and often bear them inwardly to their own determent. This has in turn created a strong community of individuals, familiar with living and struggling on their own. Unfortunately, this same determination and stoicism often keeps them ignorant of gay-friendly resources in times of ultimate crisis.

We strongly encourage you to consider funding this grant as a means of educating those who confront these situations on the "front lines," while also providing families and loved ones with reliable tools in times of crisis. If you need any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Linda L. Devocelle
Executive Director
linda@ppglcc.org